



TOWN of NEEDHAM
MASSACHUSETTS

PLANNING & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT
Economic Development
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MEETING OF THE COUNCIL OF ECONOMIC ADVISORS
WEDNESDAY, November 5, 2014 7:30 AM
Charles River Room PSAB

Present: Matt Talcoff, Chair; Glen Cammarano; Marty Jacobs; Rick Putprush; Elizabeth Grimes; Moe Handel; Peter Atallah; Bob Hentschel; and Devra Bailin, staff
Not Present: Tom Jacob; Bill Day; Janet O'Connor; Michael Wilcox; Bruce Herman; Brian Nadler; Matt Borrelli; and Lee Newman

I. Approval of Minutes

The members approved the minutes for the meeting of October 1, 2014.

II. Reminder of Next Meeting Dates

Our next meeting will be on December 3rd. Future meetings have been scheduled for the first Wednesday of the month (unless a holiday) in the Charles River Room at PSAB.

III. Update on Infrastructure Improvements in Needham Crossing

Devra explained that Town representatives are meeting with Tom Currier, head of the Highland Avenue/Needham Street Corridor project for MassDOT, about administering the MassWorks grant for the Town and the City. That grant of \$3.3 Million will pay for improvements on Highland Avenue between First Avenue and the bridge approach and for Oak and Christina intersection on Needham Street. Mr. Currier also recently confirmed the full funding for the design and construction of the First Avenue signal which may be constructed in 2016 but cannot be put into operation until the Highland Avenue interchange is completed by the Add-a-Lane project. Devra also explained that the Town is committed to performing work at Second Avenue which will effectively widen the traffic lanes but will not require any takings. There will be discussions with the owners group about having the private parties pay for the work so it can be done in March/April. The meeting with owners in Needham Crossing is being organized by Normandy for November 21st to discuss all of the infrastructure improvements being made and to obtain their input.

IV. Update on Mixed Use-128 Residential Overlay

Devra again provided the members with her draft of the Overlay and preliminary fiscal analysis. Devra explained the basic provisions and discussed the need to closely review the highlighted

provisions. It was also discussed that, although we cannot dictate rental or condo via zoning, there are concerns about the impact of home ownership on the 10% affordable goal. Devra again noted that she had Marty's comments, which included extending the overlay to Highland Avenue, with which she agreed. Devra also noted that there may be concern about allowing any multifamily development which does not carry an affordable component, as that would create further housing which needs to be counted in determining the 10% mandate. Devra commented that she needed Planning Board members' assistance in getting the drafts reviewed by a consultant, as it seemed unlikely the zoning could proceed without it. Members noted the need for housing in the area and Moe commented that there are reports that 70% of small businesses will seek to exit the market over the next years.

V. Update on Industrial District Subcommittee

Devra reminded the members that we committed the CEA into holding another public meeting to discuss our recommendations for zoning AFTER we have traffic analysis and elevation details BUT BEFORE the articles are proposed for hearing by the Planning Board. Devra reported that we now have the elevations of the areas via GIS from Ben Anderson. Devra asked Mark Gluesing if he could provide some sort of visual demonstrating the elevations of buildings on existing topography; he can but it's a couple of days work. (He thought the engineering department could do it but they have declined.) Devra asked Lee to inquire whether we could pay Mark to prepare the elevations for us. We still have no source of funding for the traffic analysis and the Planning Department has not done the density analysis required for same. Members expressed concern that this zoning will not be able to go forward at the Annual Town Meeting as promised.

VI. Update on N2 Innovation Corridor

Devra explained that the Newton-Needham Chamber of Commerce met the goal of \$50,000, including \$5000 matching funds from Needham. The grant has been submitted and we are awaiting the decision. She noted that there have been numerous meetings about promoting the corridor both with the NNCC and between the municipalities.

VII. Update on Babson Application for Detailed Marketing Plan

Babson MCFE students continue to work diligently on their plan—refining concepts and meeting with stakeholders. Yesterday they met with members of the NBA to get further input. Final presentation will be the middle of next month. Moe suggested that the students talk with the representative of ParentTalk who spoke to the LWV with us. Devra relayed the suggestion.

VIII. Update on Town Meeting Fall Warrant Articles

Town Meeting unanimously approved the matching grant of up to \$5000 for the N2 Innovation Corridor economic development initiative. It also approved the Zoning By-Law amendment extending outdoor seating to the other areas in Town where restaurants are allowed. (Devra noted that she was unsuccessful in getting the Planning Board to allow outdoor seating—small tables, chairs, benches—for retail food services like bakeries, ice cream, yogurt, and coffee shops, and the like.) Town Meeting also approved Personal Fitness in the Industrial 1 zone which finally corrects the Zoning fully as to such uses.

XI. Update on Needham Crossing Signage Work

Devra showed the proposed signage for gateway signs prepared by FastSigns. The group felt that it looked like a pizza paddle. Devra noted that Jon Feder is reviewing locations, which will have to be on private land. Devra and Rick will meet with Mark Gluesing about the signage.

X. Update on Downtown Subcommittee (Streamlining Suggestions)

Devra noted that since the members of the Downtown Subcommittee met with members of the Planning Board last month to discuss moving forward with additional streamlining efforts, nothing has happened. Included for discussion were: insignificant modifications post construction, boiler plate provisions in decisions, moratorium on requiring parking studies for restaurants and other businesses in the Downtown, administrative transfer of restaurant special permits, and other proposals to simplify the process by making it more administrative. Devra asked that members of the Planning Board move these along. Progress is not possible if both the Board and the Department do not focus on changing things that cause repeated problems for businesses.

XI. Discussion of Request from BOS on Recommendations to Improve Business Relationships

The members discussed those things which most aggravate businesses when trying to permit and/or open for business including the difficulty and time to get a temporary or permanent certificate of occupancy. The failure to distinguish between major, minor, insubstantial or minute issues—a problem Bob noted was the persistent use of sledgehammer to swat a mosquito. Especially in the downtown there is the absurd mandating of parking studies and site plans for properties and uses which have existed without parking for decades. Rick noted again issues with the Design Review Board—dictating colors notwithstanding corporate or business colors already selected, refusing to allow corporate logo on signs, and lack of explanation or guidance for subjective details make it all appear arbitrary. Devra and Rick will meet with Mark Gluesing to discuss and to attempt to resolve issues raised. It was noted that the Town departments as a whole do not seem to understand the needs of businesses—they cannot understand the cost of delay, the cost to permit (including expensive attorney fees), the need to get inventory in and the business open. Many businesses start out too much in debt because of the permitting process and then fail.

XII. Other Business

None.

XIII. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 9:30 a.m.